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VINDICATION

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*Isaac Bickerstaff Esq;*

A G A I N S T

What is Objected to Him by  
Mr. *Partridge*, in his Almanack  
for the present Year 1709.

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*By the said* ISAAC BICKERSTAFF *Esq;*

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L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year MDCCIX



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# VINDICATION

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ISAAC BICKERSTAFF Esq; &c.

**M**R. Partridge hath been lately pleased to treat me after a very rough Manner in *that which is called,* His Almanack for the present Year : Such Usage is very undecent from *one Gentleman to another*, and does not at all contribute to the Discovery of Truth, which ought to be the great End in all Disputes of the *Learned*. To call a Man *Fool and Villain*, and *impudent Fellow*, only for differing from him in a Point meerly Speculative, is in my humble Opinion a very improper Style for a Person of *his Education*. I appeal to the *Learned World*, whether in my last Year's Predictions, I gave him the least Provocation for such unworthy Treatment. Philosophers have differed in all Ages, but the discreetest among them have always differed as became Philosophers. Scurrility and Passion, in a Controversy among *Scholars*, is just so much of nothing to the purpose ; and at best, a tacit Confession of a weak Cause : My Concern is not so much for my own Reputation, as that of the *Republick of Letters*, which Mr. Partridge hath endeavoured to wound thro' my Sides. If Men of publick Spirit must be superciliously treated for their ingenuous Attempts, how will true useful Knowledge be ever advanced ? I wish Mr. Partridge knew the Thoughts which *Foreign Universities* have conceived of his ungenerous Proceeding with me ; but I am too tender of his Reputation to publish them to the World. That Spirit of Envy and Pride, which blasts so many rising Genius's in our Nation, is yet unknown among *Professors* abroad ; The Necessity of justifying my self, will excuse my Vanity, when

I tell the Reader, that I have received near a hundred honorary Letters from several Parts of Europe, (some as far as Muscovy) in Praise of my Performance. Beside several others which, as I have been credibly informed, were open'd in the P--- Office, and never sent me. 'Tis true, the *Inquisition* in P-----l was pleased to burn my Predictions, and condemn the Author and Readers of them; but I hope at the same time, it will be considered in how deplorable a State Learning lies at present in that Kingdom: And with the profoundest Veneration for Crown'd Heads, I will presume to add, That it a little concerned his Majesty of P-----l, to interpose his Authority in behalf of a Scholar and a Gentleman, the Subject of a Nation with which he is now in so strict an Alliance. But the other Kingdoms and States of Europe have treated me with more Candor and Generosity. If I had Leave to print the Latin Letters transmitted to me from Foreign Parts, they would fill a Volume, and be a full Defence against all that Mr. Partridge, or his Accomplices of the P-----l Inquisition, will be ever able to Object; who, by the Way, are the only Enemies my Predictions have ever met with at Home or Abroad. But I hope I know better what is due to the Honour of a learned Correspondence, in so tender a Point. Yet some of those illustrious Persons will perhaps excuse me for transcribing a Passage or two in my own Vindication. The most Learned Monsieur Leibnitz thus addresses to me his Third Letter: *Illustrissimo Bickerstaffio Astrologico instauratori, &c.* Monsieur le Clerc quoting my Predictions in a Treatise he published last Year, is pleased to say, *Ita nuperrime Bickerstaffius magnum illud Angliæ sidus.* Another great Professor writing of me, has these Words: *Bickerstaffius, nobilis Anglus, Astrologorum bujusce Seculi facile Princeps.* Signior Magliabecchi, the Great Duke's famous Library-Keeper, spends almost his whole Letter in Compliments and Praises. 'Tis true, the renowned Professor of Astronomy at Utrecht, seems to differ from me in one Article; but it is after the modest manner that becomes a Philosopher; as, *Pace tanti viri dixerim*: And, Pag. 55. he seems to lay the Error upon the Printer, (as indeed it ought) and says, *Vel forsan error Typographicum alioquin Bickerstaffius vir doctissimus, &c.*



If Mr. Partridge had followed this Example in the Controversy between us, he might have spared me the Trouble of justifying my self in so publick a Manner. I believe few Men are readier to own their Errors than I, or more thankful to those who will please to inform him of them. But it seems, this Gentleman, instead of encouraging the Progress of his own Art, is pleased to look upon all Attempts of that Kind as an Invasion of his Province. He has been indeed so wise, to make no Objection against the Truth of my Predictions, except in one single Point, relating to himself : And to demonstrate how much Men are blinded by their own Partiality, I do solemnly assure the Reader, that he is the only Person from whom I ever heard that Objection offer'd ; which Consideration alone, I think will take off all its Weight,

With my utmost Endeavours, I have not been able to trace above Two Objections ever made against the Truth of my last Year's Prophecies : The First was of a French Man, who was pleased to publish to the World, That the Cardinal de Noailles was still alive, notwithstanding the pretended Prophecy of Monsieur Biquersstaffe : But how far a Frenchman, a Papist, and an Enemy, is to be believed in his own Case, against an English Protestant, who is true to the Government, I shall leave to the candid and impartial Reader.

The other Objection is the unhappy Occasion of this Discourse, and relates to an Article in my Predictions, which foretold the Death of Mr. Partridge to happen on March 29. 1708. This he is pleased to contradict absolutely in the Almanack he has publish'd for the present Year, and in that ungentlemanly Manner, (pardon the Expression) as I have above related. In that Work, he very roundly asserts, That he is not only now alive, but was likewise alive upon that very 29th of March, when I had foretold he should die. This is the Subject of the present Controversie between us ; which I design to handle with all Brevity, Perspicuity and Calmness : In this Dispute, I am sensible, the Eyes not only of England, but of all Europe, will be upon us : And the Learned in every Country will, I doubt not, take Part on that Side where they find most Appearance of Reason and Truth. With-

Without entring into Criticisms of *Chronology* about the Hour of his Death, I shall only prove, that Mr. *Partridge* is not alive. And my First Argument is thus: Above a Thousand Gentlemen having bought his Almanack for this Year, meerly to find what he said against me; at every Line they read, they would lift up their Eyes, and cry out, betwixt Rage and Laughter. *They were sure no Man alive ever writ such damn'd Stuff as this.* Neither did I ever hear that Opinion disputed. So that Mr. *Partridge* lies under a *Dilemma*, either of disowning his Almanack, or allowing himself to be, *No Man alive*. Secondly, Death is defined by all Philosophers, a Separation of the Soul and Body. Now it is certain, that the poor Woman, who has best Reason to know, has gone about for some time to every Alley in the Neighbourhood, and swore to the Gossips, that *Her Husband had neither Life nor Soul in Him.* Therefore if an uninformed Carcass walks still about, and is pleased to call it self *Partridge*, Mr. *Bickerstaff* does not think himself any way answerable for that. Neither had the said Carcass any Right to beat the poor Boy, who happen'd to pass by it in the Street, crying, *A full and true Account of Dr. Partridge's Death, &c.*

Thirdly, Mr. *Partridge* pretends to tell Fortunes, and recover stolen Goods; which all the Parish says he must do by conversing with the Devil, and other evil Spirits: And no wise Men will ever allow he could converse personally with either, till after he was dead.

Fourthly, I will plainly prove him to be dead, out of his own Almanack for this Year, and from the very Passage which he produces to make us think him alive. He there says, *He is not only now alive, but was also alive upon that very 29th of March, which I foretold he should die on:* By this, he declares his Opinion, That a Man may be alive now, who was not alive a Twelvemonth ago. And indeed, there lies the Sophistry of his Argument. He dares not assert he was alive but since that 29th of March, but that he is now alive, and was so on that

*that day* : I grant the latter ; for he did not die till night, as appears by the printed Account of his Death, in a *Letter to a Lord* ; and whether he is since revived, I leave the World to judge. This indeed is perfect cavilling, and I am ashamed to dwell any longer upon it.

Fifthly, I will appeal to Mr. *Partridge* himself, whether it be probable I could have been so indiscreet, to begin my Predictions with the *only* Falshood that ever was pretended to be in them ; and this in an Affair at Home, where I had so many Opportunities to be exact ; and must have given such Advantages against me to a Person of Mr. *Partridge's* Wit and Learning, who, if he could possibly have rais'd one single Objection more against the Truth of my Prophecies, would hardly have spared me.

And here I must take Occasion to reprove the above-mentioned Writer of the Relation of Mr. *Partridge's* Death, in a *Letter to a Lord* ; who was pleased to tax me with a Mistake of *Two whole Hours* in my Calculation of that Event. I must confess, this Censure pronounced with an Air of Certainty, in a Matter that so nearly concerned me, and by a *grave judicious Author*, moved me not a little. But tho' I was at that Time out of Town, yet several of my Friends, whose Curiosity had led them to be exactly informed, (for as to my own Part, having no Doubt at all in the Matter, I never once thought of it) assured me I computed to something under half an Hour ; which (I speak my private Opinion) is an Error of no very great Magnitude, that Men should raise Clamour about it. I shall only say, it would not be amiss, if that Author would henceforth be more tender of other Men's Reputation as well as his own. It is well there were no more Mistakes of that kind ; if there had, I presume he would have told me of them with as little Ceremony.

There is one Objection against Mr. *Partridge's* Death, which I have sometimes met with, tho' indeed very slightly offered ; That he still continues to write Almanacks. But this is no more than what is common to all of that Profession ; *Gadbury*, *Poor Robin*, *Dove*, *Wing*, and several others,



others, do yearly publish their Almanacks, tho' several of them have been dead since before the *Revolution*. Now the Natural Reason of this, I take to be, That whereas it is the Priviledge of other Authors, *to live after their Deaths*; Almanack-makers are alone excluded, because their Disserations treating only upon the Minutes as they pass, became uselels as those go off. In Consideration of which, *Time*, whose *Registers* they are, gives them a Lease in Reversion, to continue their Works after their Death: Or, perhaps, a Name can *make* an Almanack, as well as it can *sell* one. And to strengthen this Conjecture, I have heard the Booksellers affirm, That they have desired Mr. Partridge to spare himself further Trouble, and only lend them his Name, which could make Almanacks much better than himself.

I should not have given the Publick, or my self, the Trouble of this Vindication, if my Name had not been made use of by several Persons, to whom I never lent it; one of which, a few days ago, was pleased to father on me a new Set of Predictions. But I think those are Things too Serious to be trifled with. It grieved me to the Heart, when I saw my Labours, which had cost me so much Thought and Watching, bawl'd about by the common Hawkers of *Grubstreet*, which I only intended for the weighty Consideration of the gravest Persons. This prejudiced the World so much at first, that several of my Friends had the Assurance to ask me, Whether I were in Jest? To which I only answered coldly, *That the Event would shew*. But it is the Talent of our Age and Nation, to turn Things of the greatest Importance into Ridicule. When the End of the Year had *verified all my Predictions*, but comes Mr. Partridge's Almanack, disputing the Point of his Death; so that I am employed, like the General, who was forced to kill his Enemies twice over, whom a *Necromancer* had raised to Life. If Mr. Partridge has practiced the same Experiment upon himself, and be again alive, long may he continue so; that does not in the least contradict my Veracity: But I think I have clearly proved, by *invincible Demonstration*, that he died at furthest within half an Hour of the Time I foretold.

F I N I S.